



Abergavenny Local History Society



(See Paddy Beynon's article on page 13)

NEWSLETTER No 30

AUGUST 2014

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email alhs@live.co.uk to be put on the Society's emailing list.

www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk

Charity registration number 1098582

PROGRAMME

2014

Thurs.
11th. Sept.

Dr. Amelia Pannett
WHAT THE TUDORS LEFT IN THE MILL
LEAT AT BUTE PARK.

Thurs.
16th. Oct.

Professor Huw Bowen
WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF COPPER.

Thurs.
27th. Nov.

Dean Turner
Dr. WILLIAM PRICE: PIONEER OF CREMATION.

December.

NO LECTURE.

If you have not renewed your membership, please send your subscription (£10 per person payable by 1st May) to the Membership Secretary as soon as you can so that your new card can be sent to you.

Thurs.
22nd. Jan.

Thurs.
26th. Feb.

Thurs
19th. March.

Thurs.
30th April.

Thurs.
21st. May.

2015

Toby Jones
NEW DISCOVERIES FROM THE
NEWPORT SHIP.

Professor Chris Evans
WALES AND THE ATLANTIC SLAVE
TRADE.

Oliver Fairclough
THE DAVIES SISTERS: ART AND COAL
IN THE EARLY 20th CENTURY.

Professor Thomas Watkins
PEOPLE AND PLACES IN WELSH
LEGAL HISTORY.

Frank Olding's talk
Follows the 38th AGM.

THE SOCIETY MEETS AT THE BOROUGH THEATRE AT 7.30 pm.

Please bring your card to all meetings.

Social events and visits will be publicised separately.

SUMMER VISITS 2014

We thank John Skinner for his meticulous organisation of this year's summer visits. The report on the recent trip to Blenheim Palace will have to wait for space until next year as the newsletter is already almost too thick for posting.

John's program for next year is already fixed and looks equally promising.

KEN KEY

PROVISIONAL VISITS PROGRAMME 2015

Members interested in going on a visit, or more than one, are advised to note the dates.

Afternoon **Tuesday 19 May**: Goodrich Castle; Garway (former Knights' Templar) Church & Medieval Dovecote;
tea en route.

All Day **Thursday 4 June**: Wroxeter Roman City; lunch Church Stretton; Ludlow incl. tea.

All Day **Tuesday 16 June**: Fonmon Castle & Gardens; pub lunch in Llancarfan & Church.
Brief visits to Llanmaer & Llantrithyd Churches; tea en route.

Evening **Thursday 2 July**: new local Industrial Archaeology Tour; pub supper afterwards.

Weekend **Friday 24 to Monday 27 July 2015**.

At the Suncliffe Hotel
East Overcliff Drive
Bournemouth

Friday: Maiden Castle Iron Age Hill Fort; lunch Dorchester; Lulworth Cove & East Lulworth; tea en route.

Saturday: Kingston Lacy House & Gardens; Wimborne Minster incl. lunch; seafront drive to hotel via Poole Harbour, Canford Cliffs, Sandbanks, etc.

Sunday: Medieval Wareham incl. lunch; Corfe Castle; optional steam train or coach to Swanage incl. tea.

Monday: Stone Age Tour: Stonehenge, drive past Silbury Hill; Avebury Ring.

All Day **Thursday 6 August**: The Queen's College Oxford incl. coffee in the College Hall; lunch in the city;
guided tour of several other Oxford Colleges; Christ Church Great Hall & Cathedral; tea afterwards.

Many thanks to all those who have helped to administer and conduct this year's visits and to the following who have agreed to continue helping: Diane Bevan, Dave Phillips, Frank Olding, David and Barbara Powell, Jane White, Richard Davies and Patricia Cane.

FUTURE VISITS:

In May 2016 we'll visit a Garden noted for its azaleas and rhododendrons. The weekend will include Chatsworth, other famous Houses in that area, Bolsover Castle and Lichfield Cathedral.

Subsequent weekend tours may include Bodiam Castle, the Battle of Hastings site and other nearby attractions; another may include Chartres Cathedral in northern France.

Members' suggestions are gratefully received.

JOHN SKINNER

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

After the sad demise of our President Gwyn Jones last year, the committee are very pleased to announce that Ken Key has agreed to become our new President. His wife, Freda, was one of the founder members and he has been indefatigable in his support over many years, working on the committee, digging up archaeology in the Castle Street car park and elsewhere, maintaining the floodlighting at the Castle, publishing the Newsletter (items always welcome!), running the rota for Church Watch and many other activities. He has promised to continue to keep a close eye on us all as President as well as continuing much of his work!

I would like to thank the committee and other volunteers from the society who have worked hard during the year. Special thanks go to Oliver Russell who, despite some health problems, has continued to supply the committee with monthly financial reports, balance the books and deal with the Inland Revenue and the Charity Commission. Alan Stone has been particularly helpful with the intricacies of Gift Aid, ably helped by our hard-working membership secretary, Sue Smith. She and David save ALHS many pounds by delivering membership cards and newsletters by hand. Our secretary, Helen Morgan provides accurate and speedy minutes as well as supplying articles promoting the Society for Focus and other outlets. She has offered to transfer her talents to being lecture secretary for the next year.

We will be saying farewell to Marian Senior and Dai Morgan as lecture secretaries. After several years working to find excellent lecturers they feel a new approach is needed, but leave us with an interesting programme for 2014-2015. Marian has offered to be the Secretary and Dai the Vice Chairman, so they will continue on the committee for the time being. The Borough Theatre has been a great help during the year and we now have its volunteers on duty to help us ensure that everyone is safe. We have good support from the technical staff also, helping Ken Key, Robert Bender and me operating the audio-visual aids, but we were sorry to say farewell to Ioan in January, leaving us in Andrew's capable hands. Jane White and Jeanette Butt provide Fairtrade tea and coffee after lectures. Jane has also worked hard this year starting a new project with four schools to research some more ceramic history plaques. Jane and I were delighted that we received such an enthusiastic response from the owners of the buildings in Market Street (Owain Glyndŵr's incursion), Neville Street (no 7 & no 9), the Angel Hotel and hopefully the Fire Plaque in the High Street.

The society had 355 members at the end of April and we could not manage without our Membership Secretary, Sue Smith. She also co-ordinates the Research Group and I would like to thank the volunteers for the past year. Lavinia O'Brien, Chris Turvey, Bianca Emberson and Sue are working on the street survey. Janet Constable, Sue Smith and myself are working on the transcription of Abergavenny Vestry book written in the 1700's.

It is with great regret that we say farewell to Paddy Beynon who leaving the committee and her posts as Floodlighting and Publications. We will miss her efficiency, support and clear thinking as a long-standing and very active member of the committee. She will continue to maintain the Victorian garden in the Castle grounds with the help of volunteers Carlyne Watkins (with energetic help from her husband Trevor who dug out the dead witch hazel tree) and Lavinia O'Brien. Hazel Buchanan is taking over organising the Floodlighting and we welcome Rebecca Barker who will be managing the Publications.



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John Skinner is now leading a team of volunteers to assist him in his onerous post. He continues to plan interesting visits and is supporting Diane Bevan as she learns the ropes of the difficult job of visits administrator, juggling places and bookings. Patricia Cane helps with the administration, while David Phillips is the assistant leader with Jane White, David and Barbara Powell, as well as the indefatigable Frank Olding, leading some of the other visits.

Helen and Dai Morgan and I represented the society at the Abergavenny Eisteddfod last year and the society donated one of the prizes. There was a bit of a mix up with order of entries by one of the

adjudicators, so I ended up presenting several prizes, making us look very generous! The Eisteddfod was well supported and the entries of excellent quality. We will donate again for the Eisteddfod on June 15th this year.

During last summer I was able to liaise with Gwent Archives and run two well-received guided tours around historic Abergavenny, visit the Museum and then travel to the Archives to look at some of the relevant archival material for Abergavenny. Dai Morgan and Jane White took two booked groups from other history societies around Abergavenny. I have attended a number of meetings on behalf of ALHS and Dai Morgan has represented us at meetings about WW1 commemorations.

The new interpretation panel in Bailey Park, by the plinth where the World War One Tank used to be, has raised a good deal of interest, including on the History Points website (<http://historypoints.org>) with a number of enquiries. There is now a trail (Law and Disorder) around the seventeen mobile phone and internet History Points of historic interest.

Last September saw three people from King Henry going on to University to study History. Matthew Collier went to Aberystwyth, Huw Miller to Worcester and Sara Watkins to Swansea. ALHS were able to award each of them £200 towards their books and computer expenses and we wish them every good fortune with their studies. We have been very pleased to get progress reports from them too.

Discovering Abergavenny: Archaeology and History by Frank Olding has sold well and we have recouped the publication costs. His previous book *Gobannium: The Romans in Abergavenny* is also still available. *Charcoal Burning in Fforest Coalpit & the Grwyne Valley* by Shirley Rippin is on sale too but we have now sold out of the Abergavenny DVD, which was already becoming rather dated. Books are available at membership prices before the lectures in the foyer, or at full price by contacting the website or publications officer or from local outlets.

The website www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk continues to develop, and Sue Smith, Helen Morgan and I keep it up-to-date and with new information. It is the source of many contacts and enquiries. The committee have bought a new computer because the previous one had limited memory and used Windows XP, now no longer supported by Microsoft. Many lecturers now bring their presentations on more up-to-date software, so we have to keep up!

Gill Wakley Chairman May 2014

St Mary's Stewarding Rota

I am grateful to Mr Michael Prys-Williams who has taken over the churchwatch duties.

I am also grateful to all those people who have been helping me to fill some 76 rotas over more than 25 years.

There are some wonderful things in St Mary's church and we should be proud to show them to our many visitors.

Michael is on 850861 and I am sure he would be grateful for new stewards to share the load.

Ken Key.

MONMOUTHSHIRE PAUPER LUNATICS in the 18th & EARLY 19th CENTURIES

The Poor Relief Act of 1601 made provision for lunatics to be included with the impotent poor who were to be cared for in poorhouses. Michael Dalton's *'The Country Justice'* was published in 1618 and states that one of the groups of paupers who were to be provided for by the Overseers of the Poor included "The Person naturally disabled, either in Wit or Member, as an Idiot, Lunatick, Blind, Lame etc." It is unlikely that the insane were properly diagnosed and were probably treated as one of the idle poor or a vagrant and sent to a house of correction. The earliest records of private madhouses appear from 1670 onwards. In the eighteenth century, influenced by trends on the continent, madhouses became increasingly common in England and hospitals for lunatics were opened in Norwich, Manchester and Liverpool as well as the famous Retreat in York. At the same time small private madhouses also became more common.

At this time in Abergavenny the Vestry was responsible for the poor of the town and parish, though sometimes it seemed better to move them on. In 1760 the Vestry paid for Clare Michael "a Lunatick" to be conveyed to London and to provide all she needed for the journey. Nothing is known of what happened to her but if she were cared for at the expense of a parish in London the Abergavenny Vestry would have been charged. In 1782 the Vestry received a bill for £10 8s from Robert Harrison of Hoxton for the care for 20 weeks of William Rosser, a lunatic of Abergavenny. The bill was honoured but it was decided that William Rosser should be collected and returned to the parish for his care. He would probably have been sent to the workhouse on his return. A workhouse had been set up in Abergavenny in 1761 (though there is mention of an earlier one) and the original intention appears to have been to include an infirmary, but there is no evidence that one ever existed. Physicians were paid to attend paupers in the workhouse, but it is improbable that they would have treated the insane.

The 1774 Madhouses Bill – required that any establishment with more than one lunatic must hold a license, to be renewed each year and be subject to an annual inspection. These madhouses were known as Licensed Houses. The inspections covered private patients but not pauper lunatics. After George III experienced a remission in his mental illness in 1789 lunacy started to be less of a stigma and to be seen as an illness that could be cured. But individual lunatics might still experience care ranging from humane to appalling.

In the nineteenth century private lunatics might be cared for at home with the family, or an attendant could be employed to care for them. Alternatively they might be "farmed out" to a family or other lodgings, or sent to a private asylum. Pauper lunatics were covered by the poor law of 1834 and were likely to end up in the workhouse, though there are records of them being in prisons and houses of correction. The 1811 County Asylums Act made the requirement that a certificate of insanity, signed by a medical practitioner, was obtained before any person could be confined in either a private or county lunatic asylum.

The first recorded asylum in Wales was Vernon House, the former residence of the Earls of Jersey, in Briton Ferry, which opened in 1843. The following year it was recorded as having three patients, one private and two pauper. Vernon House was initially run by Robert Valentine Leach, then from 1865 by Charles Pigg (though he later became Charles Pegge). By 1870 there were 120 patients of which 54 were paupers. In 1853 the *Morning Post* reported that the Visiting Commissioners had complained that most of the wards used by the patients 'by no means fulfill the requirements of a well constructed asylum' being only superficially converted from their original use as stabling and the offices of the mansion. It was at about this time possible to go on a train excursion of south Wales finishing with a visit to a Lunatic's Ball at Vernon House.



Daniel Shea was an Abergavenny man. He came before a JP, the Rev William Powell, on 4 October 1851. Shea had been seen by a surgeon and certified a Lunatic then sent to Briton Ferry, a distance of 45 miles into the care of Robert Leach but no more is known of him. Vernon House was burnt down in 1940



Whitchurch Asylum, which was run by Samuel Millard in Portland House. He published a leaflet in 1840 encouraging the use of private licensed houses as the most effective and economical way of treating lunatics. Millard was recorded in the 1841 Census as living in Portland House with his wife and family, plus servants and eight patients. By the 1851 Census there were 54 patients. Samuel Millard was medically qualified and was helped in the enterprise by his son. The asylum remained open until Samuel Millard's death in 1859. By then the Joint Counties asylum had been open for some

years. Portland House has recently been a guest house and is now a large holiday let. Ann Lewis, also known as Ann Evans, of Monmouth was sent to Whitchurch Asylum in 1848 but it took until 1850 to get confirmation that her care was chargeable to the parish of Monmouth. On 31 July 1850 John Bevan and Mary Coldicutt, both of Abergavenny were sent there. In all these cases extensive searches were made to ascertain that the right parish was responsible for the cost of care for these lunatics. Mary Mears of Mitcheltroy was sent to Whitchurch Asylum in 1846 and was the cause of an extended correspondence because Samuel Millard was not being paid for her upkeep. He had been paid £10 10s in July 1846 for her upkeep over the previous months but because of a mistake by the Finance Committee he was not paid again until 1849 when Mary Mears was visited by one of the officials and found to be sufficiently recovered to be discharged and put on a coach to London. We can only guess what happened to her after that.

Belle Vue in Devizes sounds as though it should have been the ideal place to care for the insane. Run by Thomas Phillips it is recorded in 1844 as having 148 pauper patients and 8 private ones. The 1844 Report of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy includes it in a list of "the best conducted" pauper houses. Unfortunately they were unable to keep up the high standard as in the report of 1850 it is one of three asylums named as especially defective. It was recommended for closure in 1853 but was nevertheless re-licensed. A large part of the building had been demolished by 1862 and the remaining house provided care for private patients only. We do not know if Ruth Williams was still a patient there when the care of inmates was so inadequate. She came before a JP in Newport on 4 March 1848. She had been seen by a physician and declared a "person of unsound mind". She was put into the care of Thomas Phillips and taken the 55-60 miles to Belle Vue to be cared for at a cost of ten shillings a week.

1851 saw the opening of the Joint Counties Lunatic Asylum in Abergavenny and on 16 February 1859 Mary Barry was sent there at the expense of Newport parish. She had only arrived in Newport from Cork a few days previously. She did not have settlement in England and had been confined in an asylum in Cork, but Monmouthshire appears to have accepted responsibility for her. We cannot know how she came to be in Newport, but she didn't have to travel much further to the Abergavenny asylum. The Joint Counties Asylum proved not to have enough accommodation for all the patients from the four counties and over its first 20 years the Joint Counties Asylum was expanded and new asylums were built in the other counties. But the private asylums continued to accept pauper lunatics for a long time after the opening of county asylums and the start of the system of care for the insane that eventually lead to the National Health system we know now.

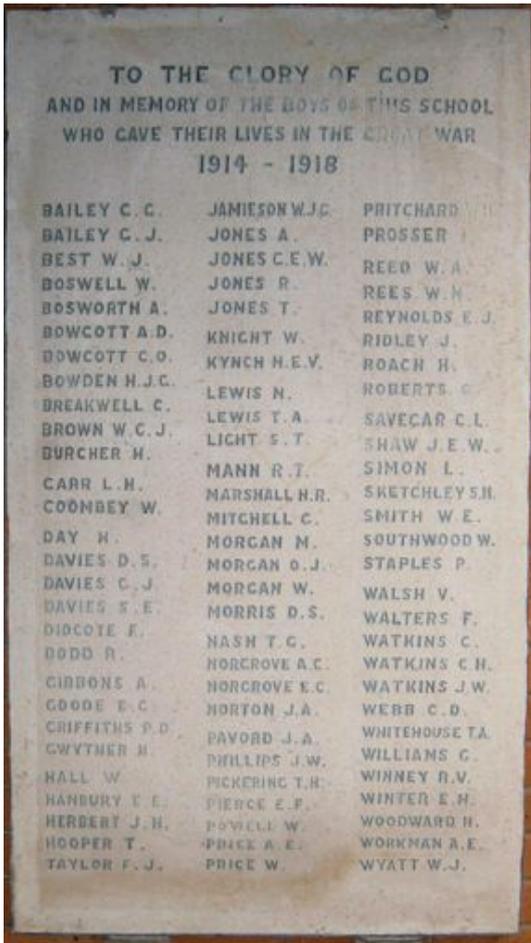
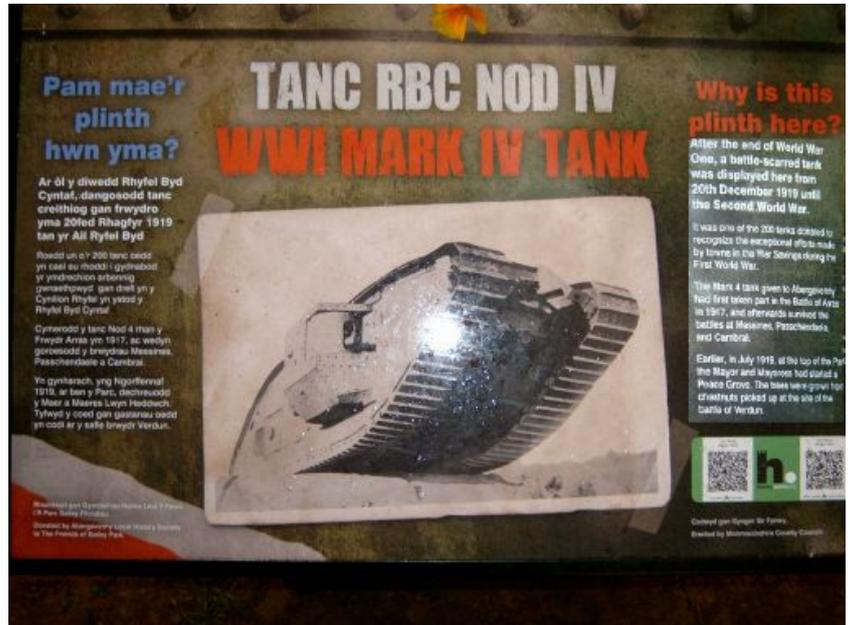
SUE SMITH

Many people will remember the First World War tank on a plinth in Bailey Park.

Sadly, it rusted away and had to be removed.

This year the Local History Society installed a commemoration board.

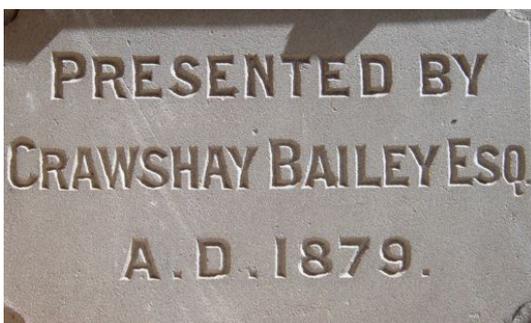
The picture proved very difficult to take. It was eventually taken at dusk with flash and the English text made clearer from another picture.



This war memorial was originally in Hereford Road School to commemorate former pupils who were killed.

The school was demolished and replaced by Bailey Court, a pleasant block of retirement flats.

The memorial was saved and positioned in the porch-way that made photography very difficult because the porch cast a shadow, so the picture was taken at dusk with flash.



Beneath it is another plaque that probably came from the old school. The shadow in this case was unobtrusive.

Exactly what Crawshay Bailey presented is not known despite numerous enquiries and a search of the internet.

The date suggests that it was the well known Crawshay Bailey's son since the ironmaster died in 1872.

QR and HISTORY POINTS

Members may be interested to see the type of information that is available on the History points website www.historypoints.org or when connecting either by the QR code on the building or by searching on the internet. A large number of 'hits' have been made to the QR points and information since they were put up. The following is an example.

Former police station, Baker Street

This building used to house the magistrates' courts and police station, from 1871 until the police moved to Lower Monk Street. The cells were in the basement.

In 1877, PC Foxwell brought a drunken woman called Elizabeth Topham, wife of an engine driver, to the police station in a wheelbarrow. He had found her lying unconscious outside the Bridge End Inn. Captain Hill, chairman of the police court, said it was a disgrace to the town for her to be seen passing through "like a dead animal" on a wheelbarrow. The following year another woman, Elizabeth Evans, was brought to the station from near the Dog Inn, where she was drunk and creating a disturbance. When her husband arrived and demanded to take her home, he was told he was too drunk. He became violent and banged the station doors, until he too was locked up.

Until the 19th century, Abergavenny had only parish constables who were elected annually. As the population grew, demands for enforcement of law and order grew.

The Improvement Act of 1794 enabled the Town Commissioners (forerunners of the town council) to appoint their own watchman and night constables. Special constables were enrolled when public disorder was expected, for example during the Chartist protests (which culminated in many Chartists being [shot outside the Westgate Hotel](#) in Newport).

From 1854, Abergavenny had four constables, but the local constabulary merged with the county force in 1857. By 1881 there were nine constables, a police superintendent and a sergeant living in Abergavenny.

The old police station is now home to Martin's Framing and Gallery. It was established in July 2005 by Martin Fletcher and displays art from Wales and further afield.

Where is this HiPoint?

Postcode: NP7 5BB

Other **CRIME** HiPoints in this region:

[Abergavenny old post office](#) – suffragette fined in 1912 for breaking a window in protest

[Three Tuns Inn, Hay-on-Wye](#) – where Great Train Robbers supped while on the run

OUR ANNUAL EVENING VISIT WITH FRANK OLDING



We took the bus to Pontypool and on to Hafodyrynys where we inspected the 'Slime Thickener'. This device separated small coal from other impurities so that it could be used in power stations instead of being dumped to waste. I searched the internet but failed to find out exactly how it worked. There was an abandoned scheme to turn it into a restaurant.



Our next stop was at the Guardian memorial at Six Bells. This was designed by Sebastien Boyesen and erected in 2010 to commemorate the colliery disaster of 28th June 1960 that killed 45 men.

It is made of COR-TEN steel that will rust to a weatherproof finish. It is 66 feet high and weighs 8 tons. It has been compared to the Angel of the North.



Our next stop was at Bute Town, not the one near Cardiff but in the Rhymney Valley. This model village was built in 1830 by the Rhymney Ironworks to house its workers. There were 400 residents in 1871. There are three rows of sixteen very elegant houses with overhanging eaves and back gardens. They are of various sizes to accommodate different family sizes. There were also a church, a school and a pub. Bute Town is very different from the terraced miners' houses we saw in Six Bells. It was featured in 2012 episode of Dr Who.

It was dark so this picture is copyright-free from the internet



On our way to supper we passed the 'Twisted Chimney', a sculpture by Brian Tolle erected in 2010. It is 25 feet high and near the former Unicorn Ironworks. It was even darker so this is another copyright-free picture from the internet.

It is made from Polystyrene covered in 6mm of Armour-Lyte, a Polyurea elastomer used for scenography. It was then hand painted.

Our final stop was the Mountain Air Inn at Trefil with beef, ham and chicken washed down with chosen beverages followed by toffee pudding and delicious cheesecake.

KEN KEY

KIDWELLY CASTLE & MIDDLETON GARDENS



Not many History Societies can organise the weather for their Summer Visits. On Saturday, May 17th it could not have been better for the visit to the National Botanic Gardens of Wales and Kidwelly Castle. Arriving on time at the Gardens, members enjoyed a morning exploring the impressive Great Glasshouse, the gardens and historical aspects of the venue such as the apothecary's shop and gardens, and the remains of Middleton Hall in the gardens of which the present centre is based.



After an enjoyable lunch and a short journey, the group arrived at Kidwelly Castle. A brief introduction followed and then the group was enthralled by a talk given by the chief of the re-enactment group "The Castle Archers". His talk was extremely interesting showing a wealth of knowledge about mediaeval longbows, arrows and arm our. After exploring the castle, the group returned to Abergavenny having had an enjoyable and educational day out.

DAVE PHILLIPS

(Visit Leader and Guide)

SUMMER WEEKEND



We had a long drive to Audley End House - a large dark mansion with lots of pictures we could hardly see. The Coal gallery, however, was most interesting. Coal, (rather square imitation) was hauled to the first floor where it fed the various rooms. In the gallery was a laundry copper and a candle cupboard, both reminiscent of my London childhood in the 1930's where the candles and oil lamps were still stored but together with a modern innovation - a gas meter.



Cambridge was invaded by hundreds of Japanese children who rather destroyed the sacredness of Kings College Chapel. However, we had really excellent guides.



Sutton Hoo has not changed since I was there many years ago. There is a fine exhibition but most of the real treasures are in the British Museum. On this occasion I was temporarily lame and David Phillips organised a motorised wheelchair for me. It was great fun and caused a lot of laughter and I was grateful to be able to try



out a vehicle that I may be using when get really old!

We had another excellent guide for Layer Marney Tower with its spiral staircases, a fantastic musical box and a welcome cup of tea.



Finally, at St Albans, we visited the amphitheatre and saw some lovely old houses



but did not manage to visit the cathedral.

Our hotel in Sandy was comfortable and our driver gave us an uneventful if long journey.

We are grateful to John Skinner for his usual meticulous organisation and to David Phillips who counted us in and out and managed to lose no one except his wife Carol but not for very long.

KEN KEY

HISTORY OF LINDA VISTA GARDENS

PADDY BEYNON

Linda Vista Gardens have a Grade 2 site evaluation in the CADW/ICOMOS entry in the Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in Wales.

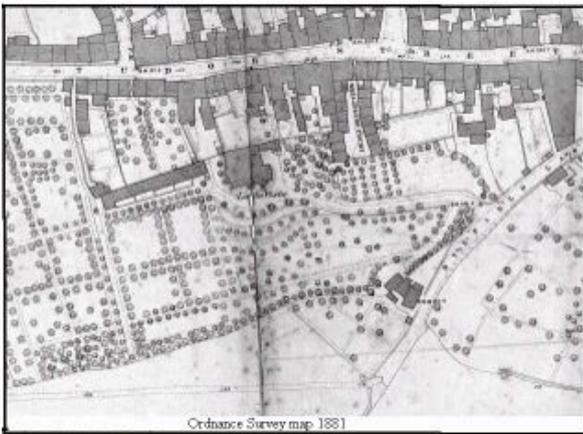
Linda Vista was built in 1875- the name means ‘beautiful view’ in Spanish. Henry Jenkins had made a fortune in a building business in Chile with his brothers, William and John. On returning to his native Abergavenny it seems likely that, despite the proximity of the town, the outlook down the Usk valley made an attractive site for his statement house.

The map of 1881 shows the main drive from Byfield Lane. In the 1870’s, Tudor Street, which runs behind the property and Byfield Lane, which lay to the east side, were densely populated with houses crammed together around narrow courts leading from the road. Many of these were lodging houses.

Some of these houses dated back to the 16C, were built by wealthy Tudor merchants and respectable burgesses but were now divided up into tenements, and in a dilapidated condition. The gardens and coach yards were filled in with cottages.

In 1847, a report on the sanitary condition of Abergavenny concluded that nearly all the requisites for health, viz fresh air, clean water and sanitation, were extremely deficient in Abergavenny. Prosser’s yard in Tudor Street is mentioned as “indescribably filthy, and almost unapproachable from the stench.” Later, in 1866, sewers were laid in Abergavenny for the first time.

Linda Vista was protected as there was no direct connection between Linda Vista and Tudor Street and there were trees along the boundary. Some very large trees with a girth of about 4.5 metres, which equates to an age of 150



The 1881 Ordnance Survey map shows terracing south of the house, corresponding to the terraced area today. The building to the west of the house was a conservatory or greenhouse. To the south of this is a formal garden with cross-paths, which roughly corresponds to the present rose garden. The square compartments to the west of Linda Vista, laid out in what is now the grassed area, were probably orchards.

A report in the Monmouthshire Merlin for 21st July 1876 on the Newport and County Horticultural Society’s Show cites Mr. Jenkins, Linda-Vista, Abergavenny, as a prizewinner, and mentions his gardener Wm. Matthews. Victorians took competing in flower shows very seriously. The head gardener did most of the

work for this, and so it was usual to recognise this.

Henry Jenkins died in May 1877 at the age of 47. His widow, Mary, continued to live at Linda Vista until her death in 1896. The house was then let. James Straker, the auctioneer, and a mayor of Abergavenny lived there. Arthur Vivian Whitehead and his wife Violet Maud were the final owners of Linda Vista from 1911. Arthur Whitehead was a wealthy industrialist whose family were owners of a steelworks in Ebbw Vale and Newport. He



Apparently Mrs Whitehead was the main force behind the development of the gardens, which were given a Victorian flavour, with the rockery area with its network of narrow paths to the south-east of the house, and the formal rose garden with box hedging to the south-west, the east-west grass terrace linking these two parts. However, Mr Whitehead also had some horticultural interest, writing to the Abergavenny Chronicle in July 1919 about the danger to children who were trespassing in his orchards of Deadly Nightshade – “*and at this season of the year bears a shining black berry, most tempting in appearance, but so deadly poisonous that one berry is sufficient to kill a child*”

The 1920 Ordnance map does not show any detail of the garden. The suggestion of terracing is as shown on the 1881 map. The conservatory to the west of the house has gone. An aerial photograph taken in 1929 gives more information.

Here we can see there is now an entrance from Tudor Street.

There are conifers planted along the southern border of the west drive.

The circular rose garden is present, also some formal layout above it.

There is an orchard area as shown in the 1920 map. This area to the west of Linda Vista is believed to be home to market gardens as well as orchards.

A Mr Reynolds worked in the gardens from 1934 until 1957 and he remembered planting many of the existing trees and shrubs. There was a staff of 3 gardeners up to WW2, and 2 post war. Some unusual trees were planted in the borders in this period: a Tulip tree, *Liriodendron tulipa*, planted among other trees and shrubs in front of the house where it is barely visible; similarly a Maidenhair tree, *Ginkgo biloba* is squashed in with the cypresses below the bottom path.

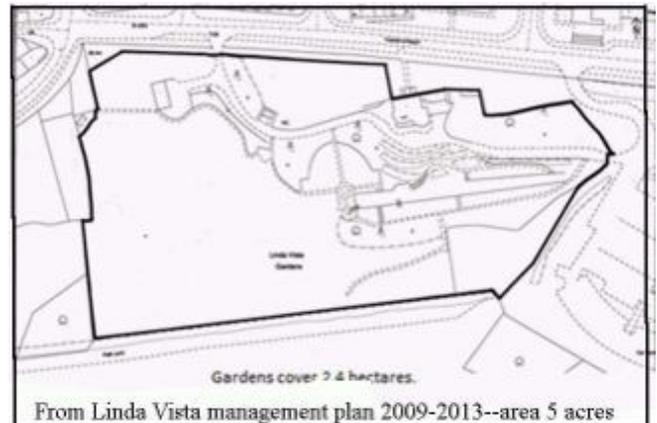


On Mrs Whitehead's death in May 1957, Linda Vista was sold to Abergavenny Borough Council for the sum of £4,000 for use as a public park. A smaller area was purchased in 1961 for £1,000. After Linda Vista gardens passed to Abergavenny Council they were extended to include land to the west (the market gardens and orchards) and to the south by incorporating part of the Castle Meadows. They now cover 2.4 hectares (~ 5 acres). The head gardener, William Buttery was given a flat in Linda Vista house, the rest of the house was used for housing association tenants. Ornamental gates were placed at both entrances.

The extended areas are grassed, and it was here that the newbeds and tree planting was done. Landscaping of the gardens was largely completed by 1964, and in the spring of 1965 the gardens were open to the public.

During this period the slum clearance of houses in Tudor street and Byefield Lane was concluded, Tudor Street was widened and straightened, with a 12 foot grass verge on the south side, and to the south of the verge a 12 foot promenade with railings. This was immediately behind Linda Vista, covering where the courts and passages of Tudor Street used to be.

For a council that had just got rid of most of medieval Abergavenny, they showed an enlightened approach to tree planting in Linda Vista using unusual trees and shrubs introduced from outside the UK, as well as cultivars of native trees.



Specimen trees planted in the grassed areas included:

Corkscrew hazel - *Corylus avellana contorta* - This intricate form of our native hazel appeared spontaneously in a Gloucestershire hedgerow in the early 1860s.

Monkey Puzzle, also called the Chilean Pine – *Araucaria araucana* I thought this was chosen because they may have known about the Chilean connection with Henry Jenkins, but no, this tree was donated in the early 80s by a member of the public because it was going to be too big for her garden. It originates from Southern Chile and Argentina. It was introduced in 1795 by Archibald Menzies, who took 5 seeds from the fruit bowl while at dinner with the Spanish Viceroy. The 5 seedlings survived, 3 were grown on at Kew, one surviving until 1892. This was a Victorian 'must have' plant.

Foxglove tree – *Paulonia tomentosa*, with lilac foxglove –like flowers produced in May/June. It was introduced from China early 1900s

Twisted Willow/Corkscrew Willow – *Salix babylonica* var *pekinensis* 'Tortuosa' Introduced from China about 1730. There were 3 originally, now only 2. They were mistakenly named as 'tortured' Chinese Willows in a Chronicle article at the time.

Indian Bean tree - *Catalpa bignonioides* Introduced 1726 from eastern USA Has white panicles of flowers late summer followed by long brown pods.

The Dawn Redwood – *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* - Introduced into the UK 1947 from the Sichuan Basin in SW China where it was discovered in 1944. (It was previously only known in fossils and thought to be extinct)

The Dawn Redwood is distinctive because it is a deciduous conifer becoming gold in autumn.

In 1974, on local government reorganisation, Monmouth District Council took over the ownership and management of the gardens until 1996, when it passed to Monmouthshire County Council.

One quirky introduction by the gardeners in the 70s was the construction of a 'Flower Basket', which fits in with the Victorian garden.



In the 1990s evening concerts were held in the gardens during the Abergavenny Festivals in July. In 2000, the Civic Society laid a 'Millennium' path at the side of part of the main lawn. Prominent businesses and organisations in the town donated slabs.

In 2004 the dead cedar had to be felled, and Neil Gow, made a sculpture from it showing on one side the famous massacre of Welsh chief tens at the castle by William de Braose, and on the other Owain Glendwr is seen cajoling a servant girl to let him in to the town through the gate. Abergavenny Local History Society has provided an interpretation board.

After 1996 when Monmouthshire County Council took control, responsibility for the gardens was diluted, and they began to decline, with the usual problems of anti-social behaviour and consequent reduction in use by the public. In 2008 MCC proposed that a 'Friends of Linda Vista Gardens' group be set up with the aim of improving the gardens. A small committee was formed. The advantage of such a group is that they can apply for grants from which local authorities are excluded.

Achievements by the 'Friends' in the last five years include:

The notices at the entrances to tell you what you must not do were replaced with some that were more welcoming.

The circle of pines underplanted with ferns was cleared and made into a play area for small children with sawn logs as stepping stones and a table and chairs carved from a tree trunk. The pine trees make natural climbing frames. We planted a living willow tunnel.

One part of the lower path was constantly flooded after rain, so a boardwalk was constructed to raise the path level. A new pathway through the trees was needed.

The moist soil alongside the boardwalk was developed into a bog garden. It looked beautiful for two years but was destroyed in the floods earlier this year when it was under-water for over six weeks.

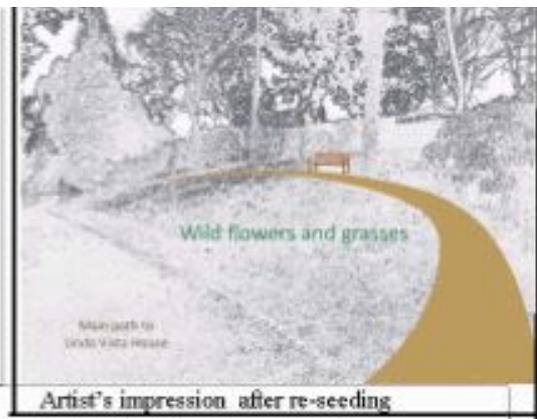
Flushed with the success of this boardwalk another one was put in at the far end of the long path to replace some steps that made it impossible for buggies or wheelchairs to negotiate. This was a real engineering feat as the slope was steep. Now a circuit of the gardens can be made with wheels.

Four of the six beds in the rose garden, which were looking very 'tired', were replanted with herbaceous perennials and annuals in a colour wheel, - so we had a red/orange bed; a yellow/cream/white bed; a blue, and finally pink/purple, making a great habitat for insects.

All these projects have increased the use of the gardens by the public with consequent increase in morale of the gardeners.

We have 2 important projects at the moment. Firstly, what we grandly call the Arboretum, an Autumn colour tree collection. We ask people to sponsor as a commitment to Abergavenny's future – a legacy. So far we have 17 trees and shrubs planted. The conifers just inside the Tudor Street gates have been cut down so the area is visible.

Secondly we are developing the grassy bank just inside the Byefield Lane entrance so that it contains a mix of meadow grasses and native wildflowers and bulbs, together with some native trees and shrubs, to replace the present mixture of ryegrass and dandelions. To achieve that will take some time so we have a notice to explain what is going on.



There is only room for a reduced version of Paddy Beynon's article in this newsletter. The full article will shortly be available on the ALHS website. You may contact Sue Smith for a printed version at nominal cost.

CRAWSHAY BAILEY'S ENGINE

John Owen aged 18 in 1854 composed words and music to 'Y Cochin Du', 'The Black Pig', a sad tale of the demise of a well-loved pet. It was published with bawdy additions without his permission and sung at fairs and in bars throughout Wales. He was so deeply ashamed that he prayed God to forgive him. One of the Crawshay Baileys, on his tomb, also asked God to forgive him. The Crawshay Baileys were not popular with their employees and the following verses were sung in pubs and clubs to John Owen's tune throughout South Wales. This anthology is far from complete. **KEN KEY**

Crawshaw Bailey had an engine
It did puff and it did blow
And it carried lots of people
All the way to Nant-y-Glo

Crawsher Bailey had an engin'
It was always needin' mendin'
And dependin' on its power
It could do four miles an hour.

On the night run up from Gower
She did twenty miles an hour
As she whistled through the station
Man, she frightened half the nation.

Cosher bought her second hand
And he painted her so grand
When the driver went to oil her
Man, she nearly burst her boiler.

Cosher Bailey's sister Lena
She was living up in Blaina
She could knit and darn our stockings
But her cooking it was shocking

Cosher Bailey's brother Rupert
Played stand off half for Newport
When they played against Llanelly
Someone kicked him in the belly.

Cosher Bailey had a daughter
Who did things she didn't oughter
She was quite beyond the pale
But over that we'll draw a veil

Cosher Bailey went to Exford
For to pass matriculation
But he saw a pretty barmaid
And he never left the station.

Oh the sight it was heart rending
Cosher drove his little engine
And he got stuck in the tunnel
And went up the blooming funnel.

Cosher Bailey's little engine
Couldn't even sound its hooter
So to make the steam go higher
He made water on the fire.

Yes, Cosher Baileyt he did die
And they put him in a coffin
But, alas, they heard a knockin'
Cosher Bailey, only jokin'

Well, the devil wouldn't have him
But he gave him sticks and matches
For to set up on his own
On the top of Barford Hatches.

Cosher Bailey's auntie Lily
Who lived down Piccadilly
She ran an institution
Teaching young girls -- elocution.

Cosher Bailey's cousin Morgan
Played a very large organ
It was long and it was narrow
And he wheeled it in a barrow.

Cosher Bailey's cousin Jake
He thought ha was a snake
While crawling through the grass
One bit him on his—elbow.

Cosher Bailey's brother Daniel
He had a cocker spaniel
If you tickled in his middle
He would lift his leg and –scratch it.

Cosher Bailey's cousin Roger
Played a mean game of soccer
When he tried his hand at rigger
He looked a silly –billy.

Cosher Bailey's cousin Paul
Had but one eyeball
By design or by desire
He sang soprano in the choir.

There was a prince called Charlie
And he visited the valley
He got drunk in Tonypandy
On a glass of cherry brandy

Mrs Jones, she had a mangle
She did wind it with an 'andle
When she turned it at full power
She did twenty sheets an hour

Cosher's older brother Diar
Wished to join the village choir
But the vicar said 'No fear'
'We don't want no Diar 'ere!

Crosher Bailey had a sister
Laughed like blazes when you kissed her
Couldn't knit nor darn a stocking
But what she could do was shocking

Cosher had a sister Ella
Who did have a fine umbrella
And she thought so much about it
That she never was without it.
Then one day she had a date
With her best friend's cousin's mate
'T would have been a tale of folly
If she hadn't had her broolly.

Cosher Bailey's brother Matthew
Had a job at cleaning statues
But when he was cleaning Venus
He slipped and broke his—elbow

Cosher Bailey's Uncle Reg
He did go behind an'edge
Uncle Reg is feeling better
But the 'edge is somewhat wetter.

Cosher Bailey's sister Hanna
Well, she played the grand pianna
She went hammer, hammer, hammer
Till the neighbours said 'Goddamn
'er'

In the choir on Sunday night
We sing better when we're tight
And our version of Cym Rhondda
Makes the angels jive up yonder.

Cosher Bailey's auntie Mary
Did something in the dairy
*(It must be more than kissing
Because these lines are missing. KK)*

Cosher 'ad an auntie Meia
She was sitting by the fire
She was making contraceptives
From an India rubber tyre

Johnny Jones he wants a missus
To keep him warm at night with
kisses.
Take him round to Bailey's sister
She's so hot she 'll raise a blister

Crawsher Bailey's sister Margaret
Was working in Carmarthen
When the gaffer came and slapped her
For chewing dirty baccar

Crawshaw Bailey's sister Moriah
She was sitting by the fire
When the fire gave a flicker
Burnt a hole right through her --
jumper

Crawshaw Bailey's sister Grace
She plays the double Bass
She also plats the fiddle
Both up and down her middle

CHORUS

Was you ever see
Was you ever see
Was you ever see
Such a funny thing before.

There is much more but most of it is
quite unprintable!